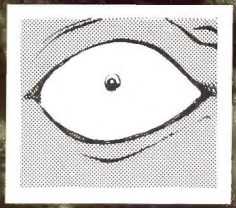
ISSN 0712-7774

Cerebus

THE SUDDEN RETURN OF THE MELODRAMATIC NARRATOR



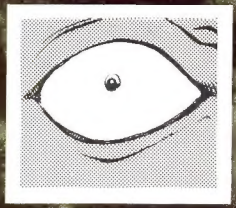
$1.70 USA $2.00 CANADA £1 UK

102
SEP

ISSN 0712-7774

Cerebus

THE SUDDEN RETURN OF THE MELODRAMATIC NARRATOR



$1.70 USA $2.00 CANADA £1 UK

102
SEP

N O T E • F R O M • T H E P R E S I D E N T

Bits and Pieces

I beseech John Byrne that when The Star Brand obliterates Pittsburgh, that he spare the Captain's Table Restaurant at the Pittsburgh airport which serves a steak on toasted garlic bread with béarnaise sauce that is second to none and which has, as well, a nice selection of dry red wines available by the glass. Many times on my journeys south, this establishment was an oasis in a desert of cellophane-wrapped ham and cheese sandwiches. Please, John, take Three River Stadium but spare the Captain's Table.

****

Heidi MacDonald takes issue with my opinion that all changes to a creative work by an outside individual are arbitrary,venturing the opinion that "we have to draw the line somewhere" without explaining who "we" are (though I could hazard a guess at the faintly-less-and-un-talented) why "we" "have to" draw the line or what line it is "we" are drawing, what "we" intend to keep penned up inside of it or what "we" intend to demarcate. Aside from that, her reasoning is flawless.

****

That's why they call them editors, dept: Colleen Doran was showing a finished job to an editor. Spotting a specific panel, the chap in question gave it the old "Mm. We might have trouble with this one" .Colleen asked why. "Naked breast." Colleen informed him that the breast in question was a male breast; not a female breast. "But," the fellow argued, "there's a nipple on it."

****

Definition of mixed emotions: Finding out your ex-wife accepted a Kirby Award on your behalf in San Diego.

****

Capital City, the distributor which goes to ridiculous lengths to establish report cards of performance for every comic book publisher in existence (even ones like Vortex who have made it quite clear that they won't publish any comic book until everyone involved is satisfied with it) is the only distributor we have trouble getting money from, now that Glenwood is gone. Consider this my report card.

****

I considered putting "Winner 1987 Kirby Award Best Black and White" "Loser 1987 Kirby Award Best Continuing Series" "Loser 1987 Kirby Award Best Art Team" "Not even fucking nominated Best Writer, Best Writer-Artist, Best Graphic Album" on the cover, but I suspected no one else would find it particularly funny, so I'm keeping it to myself. Nyah.

CEREBUS

NO. 102 SEPT. 1987

DAVE SIM
President

KAREN McKIEL
Administrator

GERHARD
Backgrounds, cover-colour, and tones.

Circulation
31,000

CHURCH AND STATE
a novel

•

BOOK ONE
(Cerebus 52 to Cerebus 56)
Apés State

•

BOOK TWO
(Cerebus 57 to Cerebus 63)
Back to Iest

•

BOOK THREE
(Cerebus 64 to Cerebus 80)
Church and State

•

BOOK FOUR
(Cerebus 81 to Cerebus 89)
The Sacred Wars

•

BOOK FIVE
(Cerebus 90 to Cerebus 101)
Astoria

•

BOOK SIX
The Final Ascention

•

BOOK SEVEN
Denoument
and
Eilogue

•

CEREBUS IS PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY AARDVARK-VANAHEIM INC. PO BOX 1674 STN. C KITCHENER ONTARIO CANADA N2G 4R2

ALL CONTENTS©1987 DAVE SIM.

PRINTED IN CANADA BY PRENEY PRINT & LITHO INC., WINDSOR, ONTARIO

All original artwork from Cerebus #103 will be donated to the Mid-Ohio-Con for auction. Dave Sim and Gerhard will be guests there on Nov. 7 and 8th.

N O T E • F R O M • T H E P R E S I D E N T

Bits and Pieces

I beseech John Byrne that when The Star Brand obliterates Pittsburgh, that he spare the Captain's Table Restaurant at the Pittsburgh airport which serves a steak on toasted garlic bread with béarnaise sauce that is second to none and which has, as well, a nice selection of dry red wines available by the glass. Many times on my journeys south, this establishment was an oasis in a desert of cellophane-wrapped ham and cheese sandwiches. Please, John, take Three River Stadium but spare the Captain's Table.

****

Heidi MacDonald takes issue with my opinion that all changes to a creative work by an outside individual are arbitrary,venturing the opinion that "we have to draw the line somewhere" without explaining who "we" are (though I could hazard a guess at the faintly-less-and-un-talented) why "we" "have to" draw the line or what line it is "we" are drawing, what "we" intend to keep penned up inside of it or what "we" intend to demarcate. Aside from that, her reasoning is flawless.

****

That's why they call them editors, dept: Colleen Doran was showing a finished job to an editor. Spotting a specific panel, the chap in question gave it the old "Mm. We might have trouble with this one" .Colleen asked why. "Naked breast." Colleen informed him that the breast in question was a male breast; not a female breast. "But," the fellow argued, "there's a nipple on it."

****

Definition of mixed emotions: Finding out your ex-wife accepted a Kirby Award on your behalf in San Diego.

****

Capital City, the distributor which goes to ridiculous lengths to establish report cards of performance for every comic book publisher in existence (even ones like Vortex who have made it quite clear that they won't publish any comic book until everyone involved is satisfied with it) is the only distributor we have trouble getting money from, now that Glenwood is gone. Consider this my report card.

****

I considered putting "Winner 1987 Kirby Award Best Black and White" "Loser 1987 Kirby Award Best Continuing Series" "Loser 1987 Kirby Award Best Art Team" "Not even fucking nominated Best Writer, Best Writer-Artist, Best Graphic Album" on the cover, but I suspected no one else would find it particularly funny, so I'm keeping it to myself. Nyah.

CEREBUS

NO. 102 SEPT. 1987

DAVE SIM
President

KAREN McKIEL
Administrator

GERHARD
Backgrounds, cover-colour, and tones.

Circulation
31,000

CHURCH AND STATE
a novel

•

BOOK ONE
(Cerebus 52 to Cerebus 56)
Apés State

•

BOOK TWO
(Cerebus 57 to Cerebus 63)
Back to Iest

•

BOOK THREE
(Cerebus 64 to Cerebus 80)
Church and State

•

BOOK FOUR
(Cerebus 81 to Cerebus 89)
The Sacred Wars

•

BOOK FIVE
(Cerebus 90 to Cerebus 101)
Astoria

•

BOOK SIX
The Final Ascention

•

BOOK SEVEN
Denoument
and
Eilogue

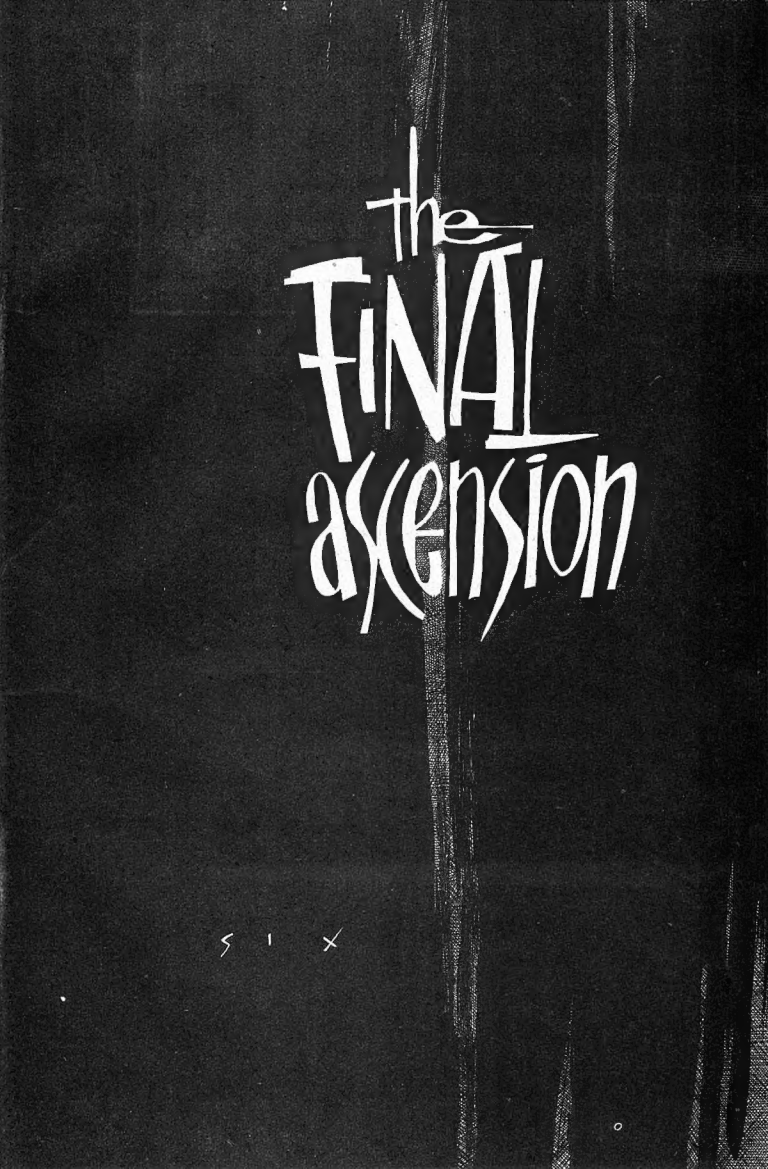
•

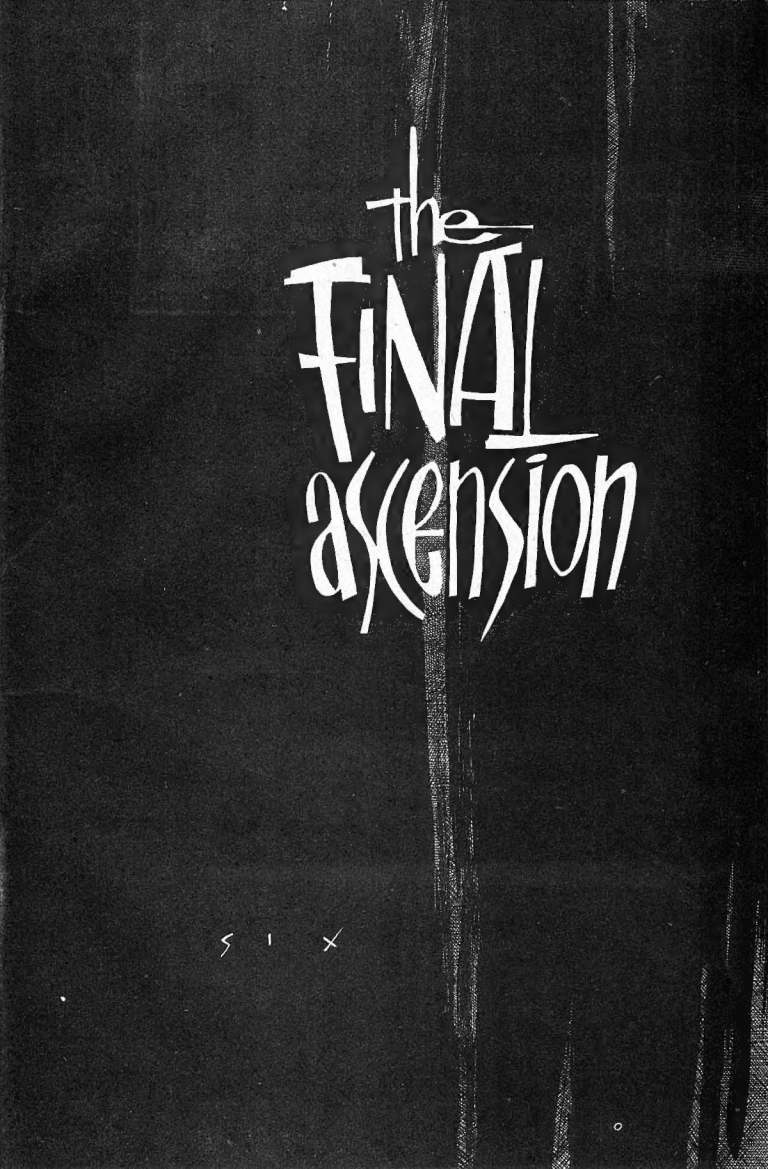
CEREBUS IS PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY AARDVARK-VANAHEIM INC. PO BOX 1674 STN. C KITCHENER ONTARIO CANADA N2G 4R2

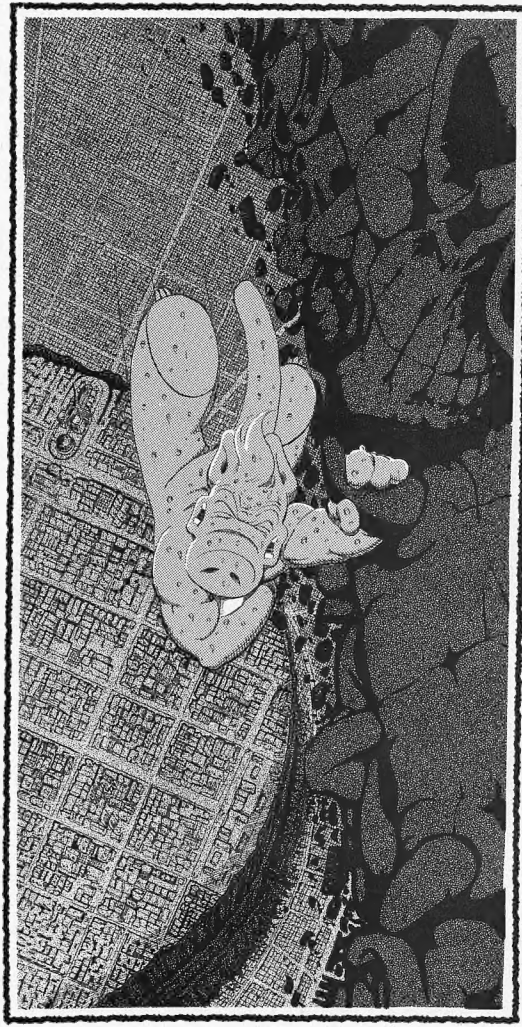
ALL CONTENTS©1987 DAVE SIM.

PRINTED IN CANADA BY PRENEY PRINT & LITHO INC., WINDSOR, ONTARIO

All original artwork from Cerebus #103 will be donated to the Mid-Ohio-Con for auction. Dave Sim and Gerhard will be guests there on Nov. 7 and 8th.


the
FINAL
ascension
SIX


the
FINAL
ascension
SIX



Accelerating smoothly, The Black Tower begins to revolve.

AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

Dear Dave,

You asked for comments from the ladies about the Astoria rape scene fooforah, so here goes;

Of course Cerebus should be thrown in jail for what he did, and of course he won't be. The rape of female religious and political prisoners by their interrogators and guards goes back to the Spanish inquisition, to the witch trials in Europe and to every contemporary political dictatorship. The rapists are never thrown in prison; the victims are usually tortured and killed (a fate I'm terribly afraid awaits Astoria - oh, Dave, please don't kill her!). Cerebus (the comic) is a brilliant satire on just those political and religious systems, so of COURSE that's what happens. Cerebus (the earth pig) has, alas, fallen for his own line, is a victim of his success and is heading for a terrible fall. We nonbelievers who are reading the book know that the pope is VERY fallible, it's only to the believers who are IN the book that the pope can do no wrong.

Of course Astoria didn't "ask for it" - she was proposing a trade. Remember, prostitutes, too, can be, and are, raped.

Of course the scene wasn't offensive. First of all, you're not condoning rape. Cerebus is your character; he isn't you. Did your readers also think you condoned throwing babies off rooftops? I get upset when I see comics that graphically represent the rape and/or torture and degradation of women as something fun to do, and when I get the impression that the artists really enjoyed what he was drawing. I get none of those impressions from your work - I never have. You also have the talent, good taste and subtlety to not get graphic. You show us what's going on by drawing one leg, rather than using a gynecological chart; I appreciate that. As for degradation, Astoria is never really degraded. She keeps her sense and her shreds of dignity. Tempting him with sex didn't work; let's try something else. For all 99 issues of Cerebus, your treatment of the women characters has been intelligent and non-sexist, but I really like Astoria - she's the sanest character in the series.

Oh Dave, please don't kill her! See you in San Diego?

Trina Robbins
San Francisco, CA.,

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

In the Note from the President of Issue #99, the President notes that "none of the Aardvark Comments regarding the rape (or "rape") in #94 have been from female readers. Opinions, ladies?"

Maybe, like me, they were waiting to see if it turned out that Mr. Sim considered the act to be rape or "rape".

I did write to you. Apparently you just printed the letter because I wished you well for thirty years instead of "fifteen years, nine months." So then you can snicker, "Then you're on your own, princess." Hahaha. Hey, look, guys, the stupid cunt can't count. Ha, ha.

Dave Sim, the author of CEREBUS and Dave Sim, the author of Note from the President and the editor and correspondent of Aardvark Comment seem to be two different men. And there is no way I'm going to sit down and draft and re-draft a full, colored, specific and deeply felt essay in response to a jarring and upsetting but aesthetically powerful artwork involving **rape**, of all things, and set it down in the playground of the prickhad who likes to blast apart any peon who walks into range.

Connie Lingus been heard from lately? Great chick, huh? Not like these feminists who keep messing things up, right?

So I couldn't bring myself to go into detail, but I wrote. "I don't have something coherent to say on the Big Surprise at the end -- mixed emotions is an understatement." Even though your letter column is a minefield, I had to respond, so I indicated a deep reaction without risking going into it.

And Mr. Sim of the letter column doesn't hear a thing.

The Mister Sim who writes and draws CEREBUS has my heartiest thanks and applause. Also recognition, laughter and horror. And, if you're interested in reactions to #94, mourning.

To the voice of the letter column...oh, never mind.

Warily,

Denise Ozker
122 Seventh Avenue, #2
Brooklyn, NY., 11215

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

You asked for the opinions of female readers, so I'm responding: I was very angry at Cerebus for raping Astoria. (In comparison, it didn't bother me when he tossed the baby off the roof). Knee-jerk response: Dave is getting too misogynist, and this might encourage violence against women.

Second thoughts: I'm supposed to be angry at Cerebus; Dave is showing how Absolute Power Corrupts and how low the aardvark has sunk in his elevation to Pope. The rape is not a gratuitous advertisement nor a careless artistic choice, but essential to some future development. (I've been reading since #23; I trust you.)

And then I read #99. I wrote my doctoral dissertation on Sir James Frazer's **The Golden Bough** -- full of dying and reviving gods and beloved and feared goddesses - so the revelations in #99 were a special treat. But I was left with a lingering reservation: in any of the previous cycles, did the female ever rape the male?

This kind of question bothers me. Females are far more frequently victims than perpetrators of violence, yet our society downplays the significance of this imbalance. I am made uneasy by anything that might encourage or make light of aggression against women.

AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

Dear Dave,

You asked for comments from the ladies about the Astoria rape scene fooforah, so here goes;

Of course Cerebus should be thrown in jail for what he did, and of course he won't be. The rape of female religious and political prisoners by their interrogators and guards goes back to the Spanish inquisition, to the witch trials in Europe and to every contemporary political dictatorship. The rapists are never thrown in prison; the victims are usually tortured and killed (a fate I'm terribly afraid awaits Astoria - oh, Dave, please don't kill her!). Cerebus (the comic) is a brilliant satire on just those political and religious systems, so of COURSE that's what happens. Cerebus (the earth pig) has, alas, fallen for his own line, is a victim of his success and is heading for a terrible fall. We nonbelievers who are reading the book know that the pope is VERY fallible, it's only to the believers who are IN the book that the pope can do no wrong.

Of course Astoria didn't "ask for it" - she was proposing a trade. Remember, prostitutes, too, can be, and are, raped.

Of course the scene wasn't offensive. First of all, you're not condoning rape. Cerebus is your character; he isn't you. Did your readers also think you condoned throwing babies off rooftops? I get upset when I see comics that graphically represent the rape and/or torture and degradation of women as something fun to do, and when I get the impression that the artists really enjoyed what he was drawing. I get none of those impressions from your work - I never have. You also have the talent, good taste and subtlety to not get graphic. You show us what's going on by drawing one leg, rather than using a gynecological chart; I appreciate that. As for degradation, Astoria is never really degraded. She keeps her sense and her shreds of dignity. Tempting him with sex didn't work; let's try something else. For all 99 issues of Cerebus, your treatment of the women characters has been intelligent and non-sexist, but I really like Astoria - she's the sanest character in the series.

Oh Dave, please don't kill her! See you in San Diego?

Trina Robbins
San Francisco, CA.,

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

In the Note from the President of Issue #99, the President notes that "none of the Aardvark Comments regarding the rape (or "rape") in #94 have been from female readers. Opinions, ladies?"

Maybe, like me, they were waiting to see if it turned out that Mr. Sim considered the act to be rape or "rape".

I did write to you. Apparently you just printed the letter because I wished you well for thirty years instead of "fifteen years, nine months." So then you can snicker, "Then you're on your own, princess." Hahaha. Hey, look, guys, the stupid cunt can't count. Ha, ha.

Dave Sim, the author of CEREBUS and Dave Sim, the author of Note from the President and the editor and correspondent of Aardvark Comment seem to be two different men. And there is no way I'm going to sit down and draft and re-draft a full, colored, specific and deeply felt essay in response to a jarring and upsetting but aesthetically powerful artwork involving **rape**, of all things, and set it down in the playground of the prickhad who likes to blast apart any peon who walks into range.

Connie Lingus been heard from lately? Great chick, huh? Not like these feminists who keep messing things up, right?

So I couldn't bring myself to go into detail, but I wrote. "I don't have something coherent to say on the Big Surprise at the end -- mixed emotions is an understatement." Even though your letter column is a minefield, I had to respond, so I indicated a deep reaction without risking going into it.

And Mr. Sim of the letter column doesn't hear a thing.

The Mister Sim who writes and draws CEREBUS has my heartiest thanks and applause. Also recognition, laughter and horror. And, if you're interested in reactions to #94, mourning.

To the voice of the letter column...oh, never mind.

Warily,

Denise Ozker
122 Seventh Avenue, #2
Brooklyn, NY., 11215

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

You asked for the opinions of female readers, so I'm responding: I was very angry at Cerebus for raping Astoria. (In comparison, it didn't bother me when he tossed the baby off the roof). Knee-jerk response: Dave is getting too misogynist, and this might encourage violence against women.

Second thoughts: I'm supposed to be angry at Cerebus; Dave is showing how Absolute Power Corrupts and how low the aardvark has sunk in his elevation to Pope. The rape is not a gratuitous advertisement nor a careless artistic choice, but essential to some future development. (I've been reading since #23; I trust you.)

And then I read #99. I wrote my doctoral dissertation on Sir James Frazer's **The Golden Bough** -- full of dying and reviving gods and beloved and feared goddesses - so the revelations in #99 were a special treat. But I was left with a lingering reservation: in any of the previous cycles, did the female ever rape the male?

This kind of question bothers me. Females are far more frequently victims than perpetrators of violence, yet our society downplays the significance of this imbalance. I am made uneasy by anything that might encourage or make light of aggression against women.

Unless the rape is, in your opinion, the very best way to illustrate Cerebus' corruption, and unless you show the rape to have an equally contemptible parallel in some previous, female-dominated cycle, then I would prefer a less potentially misunderstood, misleading, and inequitable symbol of this cycle's depravity.

However, I suspect that rape is indeed the best symbol for your purpose. It is certainly the most dehumanizing form of our society's violence against women, and this violence seems to be involved in many of your current dichotomies: male female, powerful powerless, destroyer creator. No matter who is at fault here, what comes around goes around, and we all suffer.

Or isn't Cerebus going to suffer? You ask: "Who is going to throw the Pope in Jail?," implying that no one can do such a thing. But allowing Cerebus to go unpunished will only encourage dangerous thoughts in those Jr. Rapist Readers who believe that Astoria -- or any woman -- "asked for it". I'm not religious and have little authority to speak, but isn't the Pope's Creator supposed to punish the Pope? And, by the same logic, isn't it your responsibility to sentence Cerebus?

Well, I've responded. No doubt you've set me up; no sooner will I post this than #100 will hit the stands and make me sound a fool. But what's a little loss of face compared to rape's loss of self?

Carolyn Hill
2410 Dwight Way #8
Berkeley, CA., 94704

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear (not really) Dave,

"I don't do personal appearances anymore....."

Yup, truly a dink indeed. There goes my chances of ever meeting Dave Sim in person. What's a gal to do?

Jeez,

Katie MacMillen
27990 Via Ventana,
Los Altos Hills, CA., 94022

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I was a little surprised when you reported that no female readers had written to you concerning #94. Perhaps some of them felt as I did; since you asked, I thought I'd let you know what my reaction was.

Part of that reaction was a response to #94 alone. I buy comics on my lunch hour, and usually hustle back to the office so I can peruse the prize acquisitions before lunch ends. On the day #94 came out it was **the** acquisition. When I finished, I was glad I hadn't eaten anything beforehand. I felt ill. I was appalled. I couldn't identify any single emotion at the time, just a "no, no, no!" of rejection.

This resolved into anger. I felt #94 left open too far the door for readers to interpret it as justification for rape. I am very definitely a feminist, and have read a great deal about rape (including the male-edited anthology of opinions, **Men On Rape**). Because rape as an issue and an act is so prevalent and so destructive, I have in my own mind classed it as an issue about which one should never be ambiguous. Here in #94 we have Astoria "asking for it" in a stereotypical way. She does not appear to experience physical pain during the rape, nor emotional stress afterwards, save perhaps the "seed dispenser" comment in #96. Worse, since Astoria has the reputation of a managing bitch in the eyes of much of the readership, it is easy to envision many thinking, "Ah, all she needs is a good lay to put her in her place." Appearances at the time were, she got it. **I hated** that. I was fiercely angry that anyone with any awareness about rape could present it that way.

The following week I handed #94 to a male friend, a loyal **Cerebus** fan, and watched him read it. He tore through it and closed the back cover with a chuckle. I just stared, not knowing what to say. Apparently I was really missing something.

I made myself chill out. I went back and read #94 several more times. Then I saw that the rape made possible an infinite number of twists in the plot. It was a logical result of what we know of Cerebus' reactions. Astoria's lack of hysteria and concern with other events was also in character. And, of course, the ambiguity was a hall-mark Sim "Let's stir the coals a bit, shall we?" approach.

Okay. I still don't agree with what you did. I still wish you hadn't done it. But I acknowledge that you have the right to make your points your own way, and that, artistically and intellectually, **that** point was made with some integrity. Certainly it is better to make people think for themselves rather than telling them what to think. And I am heartily thankful that you defined your personal stand in #99. It probably did more than anything else could have to mitigate the "she deserved it" reaction.

But why didn't the female readers write in? A lot of it may have to do with the combination of feminism and negativity in Astoria's character, and with your attitudes as they come through in "letter from the President" and "Aardvark Comment". Astoria's feminist philosophy has been trivialized in the past. (I found her assertion that she did as she did in "High Society" solely so women could get the vote rather absurd.) The surfeit of extremely superficial feminist rhetoric in #96, and her uncharacteristic queasiness at the mention of pulling wings off flies, didn't help. Again, there is artistic justification - it becomes more palatable the more nearly it is related to Cirinism. As feminism, though, I don't like it. (I realize that all of it is intended as Cirinism. It doesn't always look that way, though.)

The "Letter from the President" in #96 sums up the scattered comments and implications of past letters and lettercol replies. The term liberated is not one that makes me wince in and of itself (though I thoroughly agree it is utopian, not realistic). When it is put in quotes and tossed in my face with a sneer, however, I do recoil. Anyone with the ability to write can make an insult count - and you can write well.

Rape, unfortunately, has been labelled a "feminist" issue, not a human one. After all it's only those bull dyke "women's libbers" who march in Reclaim the Night rallies, isn't it? The stigma of being a comics reader, far less a female comics reader, over the age of 21 can be pretty bad. How many women are likely to argue a "feminist" issue in the lettercol of a comic if they feel they will be hit with ridicule there, too?

Consider further. In the #96 letter, you tell us a story about a night at a bar. You make it clear that you expect women to come to you, and that when they do you judge them solely by their sexual attractiveness - "hot-looking chicks." You then complain that the woman of your story treated you as though all that

Unless the rape is, in your opinion, the very best way to illustrate Cerebus' corruption, and unless you show the rape to have an equally contemptible parallel in some previous, female-dominated cycle, then I would prefer a less potentially misunderstood, misleading, and inequitable symbol of this cycle's depravity.

However, I suspect that rape is indeed the best symbol for your purpose. It is certainly the most dehumanizing form of our society's violence against women, and this violence seems to be involved in many of your current dichotomies: male female, powerful powerless, destroyer creator. No matter who is at fault here, what comes around goes around, and we all suffer.

Or isn't Cerebus going to suffer? You ask: "Who is going to throw the Pope in Jail?," implying that no one can do such a thing. But allowing Cerebus to go unpunished will only encourage dangerous thoughts in those Jr. Rapist Readers who believe that Astoria -- or any woman -- "asked for it". I'm not religious and have little authority to speak, but isn't the Pope's Creator supposed to punish the Pope? And, by the same logic, isn't it your responsibility to sentence Cerebus?

Well, I've responded. No doubt you've set me up; no sooner will I post this than #100 will hit the stands and make me sound a fool. But what's a little loss of face compared to rape's loss of self?

Carolyn Hill
2410 Dwight Way #8
Berkeley, CA., 94704

****

Dear (not really) Dave,

"I don't do personal appearances anymore .."

Yup, truly a dink indeed. There goes my chances of ever meeting Dave Sim in person. What's a gal to do?

Jeez,

Katie MacMillen
27990 Via Ventana,
Los Altos Hills, CA., 94022

****

Dear Dave,

I was a little surprised when you reported that no female readers had written to you concerning #94. Perhaps some of them felt as I did, since you asked, I thought I'd let you know what my reaction was.

Part of that reaction was a response to #94 alone. I buy comics on my lunch hour, and usually hustle back to the office so I can peruse the prize acquisitions before lunch ends. On the day #94 came out it was **the** acquisition. When I finished, I was glad I hadn't eaten anything beforehand. I felt ill. I was appalled. I couldn't identify any single emotion at the time, just a "no, no, no!" of rejection.

This resolved into anger. I felt #94 left open too far the door for readers to interpret it as justification for rape. I am very definitely a feminist, and have read a great deal about rape (including the male-edited anthology of opinions, **Men On Rape**). Because rape as an issue and an act is so prevalent and so destructive, I have in my own mind classed it as an issue about which one should never be ambiguous. Here in #94 we have Astoria "asking for it" in a stereotypical way. She does not appear to experience physical pain during the rape, nor emotional stress afterwards, save perhaps the "seed dispenser" comment in #96. Worse, since Astoria has the reputation of a managing bitch in the eyes of much of the readership, it is easy to envision many thinking, "Ah, all she needs is a good lay to put her in her place." Appearances at the time were, she got it. I **hated** that. I was fiercely angry that anyone with any awareness about rape could present it that way.

The following week I handed #94 to a male friend, a loyal **Cerebus** fan, and watched him read it. He tore through it and closed the back cover with a chuckle. I just stared, not knowing what to say. Apparently I was really missing something.

I made myself chill out. I went back and read #94 several more times. Then I saw that the rape made possible an infinite number of twists in the plot. It was a logical result of what we know of Cerebus' reactions. Astoria's lack of hysteria and concern with other events was also in character. And, of course, the ambiguity was a hall-mark Sim "Let's stir the coals a bit, shall we?" approach

Okay. I still don't agree with what you did. I still wish you hadn't done it. But I acknowledge that you have the right to make your points your own way, and that, artistically and intellectually, **that** point was made with some integrity. Certainly it is better to make people think for themselves rather than telling them what to think. And I am heartily thankful that you defined your personal stand in #99. It probably did more than anything else could have to mitigate the "she deserved it" reaction.

But why didn't the female readers write in? A lot of it may have to do with the combination of feminism and negativity in Astoria's character, and with your attitudes as they come through in "letter from the President" and "Aardvark Comment". Astoria's feminist philosophy has been trivialized in the past. (I found her assertion that she did as she did in "High Society" solely so women could get the vote rather absurd.) The surfeit of extremely superficial feminist rhetoric in #96, and her uncharacteristic queasiness at the mention of pulling wings off flies, didn't help. Again, there is artistic justification - it becomes more palatable the more nearly it is related to Cirinism. As feminism, though, I don't like it. (I realize that all of it is intended as Cirinism. It doesn't always look that way, though.)

The "Letter from the President" in #96 sums up the scattered comments and implications of past letters and lettercol replies. The term liberated is not one that makes me wince in and of itself (though I thoroughly agree it is utopian, not realistic). When it is put in quotes and tossed in my face with a sneer, however, I do recoil. Anyone with the ability to write can make an insult count - and you can write well.

Rape, unfortunately, has been labelled a "feminist" issue, not a human one. After all it's only those bull dyke "women's libbers" who march in Reclaim the Night rallies, isn't it? The stigma of being a comics reader, far less a female comics reader, over the age of 21 can be pretty bad. How many women are likely to argue a "feminist" issue in the lettercol of a comic if they feel they will be hit with ridicule there, too?

Consider further. In the #96 letter, you tell us a story about a night at a bar. You make it clear that you expect women to come to you, and that when they do you judge them solely by their sexual attractiveness - "hot-looking chicks." You then complain that the woman of your story treated you as though all that

mattered to you was her sexual attractiveness. She was correct. It doesn't excuse her, but she was correct. You say, "Once again, he would either get thrown out or booked for assault. It bothers me immensely that women (does one woman's actions define all women?) think nothing of indulging in behavior they find unconscionable... ."

It is not rudeness that women find unconscionable. Moreover, a man is rarely booked for the behavior you describe. I've watched such behavior, and been the victim of it, in very public places. I am nearly six feet tall and by no means "hot-looking", but nevertheless I've been slammed against a wall and forcibly kissed in a crowded subway. A girl in my high school was surrounded by boys and stripped from the waist down in a monitored corridor. A college friend danced with another guy and was slapped to the ground for it by her boyfriend. Yet other acquaintances have been raped by coaches, professors, or men on the street. In not a single case has there been action of any sort, much less a criminal charge.

You were discomfited, Dave. That woman was indeed very rude. But you were under no threat of physical violence. This "hot-looking chick" was not a person you thought could hurt you. She could not indulge in behavior women find unconscionable because she could never instill in you the fear that she, and every woman, must experience when men are similarly rude.

That is the difference - the constant, visceral fear. The men who get away with it. The climbing, damning statistics. It is wrong to generalize the experience you had into an implicit commentary against the "feminists" who wrote and speak out against violence and rape. I feel that the efforts of these women deserve praise far more than the woman who embarrassed you deserves to be castrigated in print - complete with jeers against feminism.

After I read your letter, I was fairly well convinced that my views as a **female** reader were probably not going to get a fair hearing, particularly if I discussed rape. Possibly other women reading **Cerebus** felt the same way. It seems likely to me that many of us felt intimidated, and chose to be anonymous rather than the butt of ridicule.

As you usually do, however, you made a radical shift in your presentation, took a strong stand against violence against women, and openly called for some female opinion.

Here it is.

Kate DeGroot
P.O. Box 513,
Enfield, CT., 06082

****

Friends,

The editorial of Cerebus #99 was something of a challenge to answer. Why didn't I write a letter about the rape scene? It **was** a rape scene, of course – I don't see any question of that, not enough to waste words talking about.

So why didn't I write to say "Good for you" or "Shame of you" or any of those other things fans are supposed to say. Why not? Not fear of the famous Sim sabre-tooth wit. Not lack of reaction. Not indifference, and not disgust.

Rape is a heavy topic. A very frightening one which, in the face of man's indifference, or misunderstanding ("she was asking for it", or worse, "she really enjoyed it"), or titillated pleasure in the subject, it is easiest to lapse into silence and keep the nightmare to myself.

Also, in this case, the story said all that it needed to say – commentary seems unnecessary either as explanation or elaboration. For some time now, Cerebus' endearing flaws have been hardening into self-absorbed cruelty, as his power grows. This ties in fine with my opinion of potentates and power-seekers.

It is enough to say that of all the characters to have appeared in 99 issues of Cerebus, Astoria is the one I have most identified with, consistently. (The Regency Elf would come second. Is she gone forever? I don't believe it for a minute)

I have always been impressed by the way the tone of this comic can go from hilarious to sad to dramatically suspenseful in the space of a few panels. #99 was a striking example of this, and had a convincing feel to it which (meaning no denigration to comics) transcended the vehicle of comics by **using** the vehicle of comics with precise, sensitive skill. It felt more like a novel or movie, because that realm of feeling is used more often in novels and movies, and is rare even then, especially with fantasy. Then here it turns up in this story about a barbarian aardvark. Life is weird.

I've always thought it a little phony, though fun, too, to make a fuss over 100th issues of comics. It's only another number, right? So why am I especially looking forward to Cerebus #100? Brain-washing, probably. Dr. Wertham would tell you.

I sense a thickening plot.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Holden
2385 Carling Ave., #111
Ottawa, Ontario

****

Dear Dave,

I have just read your "Note from the President" in Cerebus 96.

What you described hasn't much to do with "feminists", "masculinists" or "being liberated". It is simple that age-old thing called "being treated like a piece of meat". Which if you hang out in bars you have to expect. And since your criteria for dancing with a chick is based on whether she's hot-looking it seems rational to assume that you shouldn't be treated as anything other than a body. Which is to say, if you expct to be treated with dignity and respect you must treat other people as whole human beings.

The other thing that your note brings to mind is the sad lack of romance in the world. Personally I mourn the passing of such deliciously fun things as flirting and slow seduction. Much of the pleasure is in the anticipation and the delicate maneuverings of the courtship game.

I am also addicted to drinking, dancing and dressing up. I am by no means hot-looking, but have had my share of macho men who thought I was dying of lust for them. I recently had the great fortune of pursuing an attraction to one of the "average-looking" ones. And was rewarded with an immensely sensual, erotic and thought provoking weekend.

Perhaps if you involve your mind along with your prick you will meet a better class of lady

Carolyn Cline
103 Spit Brook Road, Apt C-12A
Nashua, NH., 03062

mattered to you was her sexual attractiveness. She was correct. It doesn't excuse her, but she was correct. You say, "Once again, he would either get thrown out or booked for assault. It bothers me immensely that women (does one woman's actions define all women?) think nothing of indulging in behavior they find unconscionable... ."

It is not rudeness that women find unconscionable. Moreover, a man is rarely booked for the behavior you describe. I've watched such behavior, and been the victim of it, in very public places. I am nearly six feet tall and by no means "hot-looking", but nevertheless I've been slammed against a wall and forcibly kissed in a crowded subway. A girl in my high school was surrounded by boys and stripped from the waist down in a monitored corridor. A college friend danced with another guy and was slapped to the ground for it by her boyfriend. Yet other acquaintances have been raped by coaches, professors, or men on the street. In not a single case has there been action of any sort, much less a criminal charge.

You were discomfited, Dave. That woman was indeed very rude. But you were under no threat of physical violence. This "hot-looking chick" was not a person you thought could hurt you. She could not indulge in behavior women find unconscionable because she could never instill in you the fear that she, and every woman, must experience when men are similarly rude.

That is the difference - the constant, visceral fear. The men who get away with it. The climbing, damning statistics. It is wrong to generalize the experience you had into an implicit commentary against the "feminists" who wrote and speak out against violence and rape. I feel that the efforts of these women deserve praise far more than the woman who embarrassed you deserves to be castrigated in print - complete with jeers against feminism.

After I read your letter, I was fairly well convinced that my views as a **female** reader were probably not going to get a fair hearing, particularly if I discussed rape. Possibly other women reading **Cerebus** felt the same way. It seems likely to me that many of us felt intimidated, and chose to be anonymous rather than the butt of ridicule.

As you usually do, however, you made a radical shift in your presentation, took a strong stand against violence against women, and openly called for some female opinion.

Here it is.

Kate DeGroot
P.O. Box 513,
Enfield, CT., 06082

****

Friends,

The editorial of Cerebus #99 was something of a challenge to answer. Why didn't I write a letter about the rape scene? It **was** a rape scene, of course – I don't see any question of that, not enough to waste words talking about.

So why didn't I write to say "Good for you" or "Shame of you" or any of those other things fans are supposed to say. Why not? Not fear of the famous Sim sabre-tooth wit. Not lack of reaction. Not indifference, and not disgust.

Rape is a heavy topic. A very frightening one which, in the face of man's indifference, or misunderstanding ("she was asking for it", or worse, "she really enjoyed it"), or titillated pleasure in the subject, it is easiest to lapse into silence and keep the nightmare to myself.

Also, in this case, the story said all that it needed to say – commentary seems unnecessary either as explanation or elaboration. For some time now, Cerebus' endearing flaws have been hardening into self-absorbed cruelty, as his power grows. This ties in fine with my opinion of potentates and power-seekers.

It is enough to say that of all the characters to have appeared in 99 issues of Cerebus, Astoria is the one I have most identified with, consistently. (The Regency Elf would come second. Is she gone forever? I don't believe it for a minute)

I have always been impressed by the way the tone of this comic can go from hilarious to sad to dramatically suspenseful in the space of a few panels. #99 was a striking example of this, and had a convincing feel to it which (meaning no denigration to comics) transcended the vehicle of comics by **using** the vehicle of comics with precise, sensitive skill. It felt more like a novel or movie, because that realm of feeling is used more often in novels and movies, and is rare even then, especially with fantasy. Then here it turns up in this story about a barbarian aardvark. Life is weird.

I've always thought it a little phony, though fun, too, to make a fuss over 100th issues of comics. It's only another number, right? So why am I especially looking forward to Cerebus #100? Brain-washing, probably. Dr. Wertham would tell you.

I sense a thickening plot.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Holden
2385 Carling Ave., #111
Ottawa, Ontario

****

Dear Dave,

I have just read your "Note from the President" in Cerebus 96.

What you described hasn't much to do with "feminists", "masculinists" or "being liberated". It is simple that age-old thing called "being treated like a piece of meat". Which if you hang out in bars you have to expect. And since your criteria for dancing with a chick is based on whether she's hot-looking it seems rational to assume that you shouldn't be treated as anything other than a body. Which is to say, if you expct to be treated with dignity and respect you must treat other people as whole human beings.

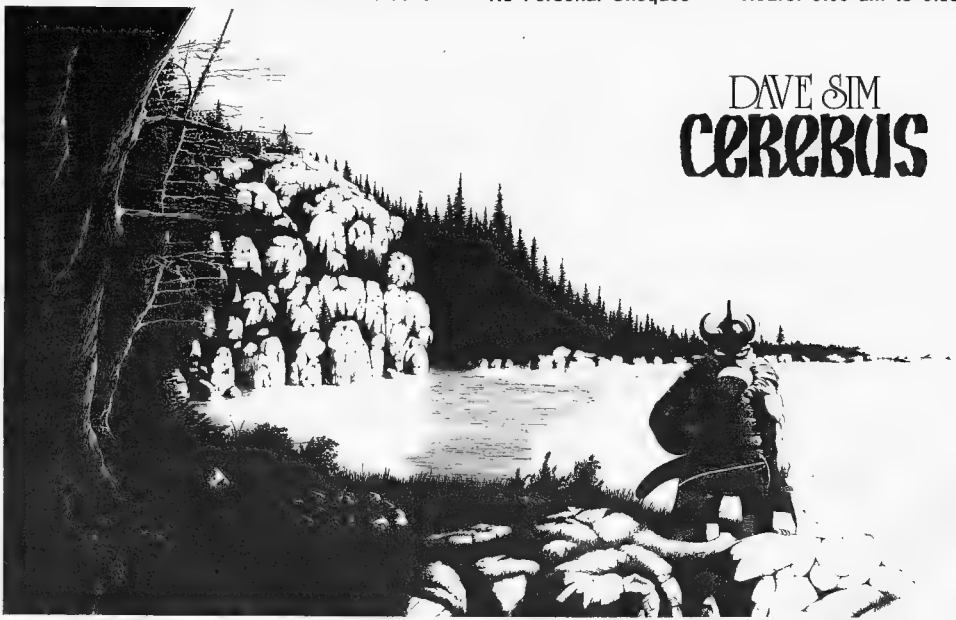
The other thing that your note brings to mind is the sad lack of romance in the world. Personally I mourn the passing of such deliciously fun things as flirting and slow seduction. Much of the pleasure is in the anticipation and the delicate maneuverings of the courtship game.

I am also addicted to drinking, dancing and dressing up. I am by no means hot-looking, but have had my share of macho men who thought I was dying of lust for them. I recently had the great fortune of pursuing an attraction to one of the "average-looking" ones. And was rewarded with an immensely sensual, erotic and thought provoking weekend.

Perhaps if you involve your mind along with your prick you will meet a better class of lady

Carolyn Cline
103 Spit Brook Road, Apt C-12A
Nashua, NH., 03062

PHONE NUMBERS 519-576-7820 • 519-576-0610 No Personal Cheques Hours: 9:00 am to 6:00 pm



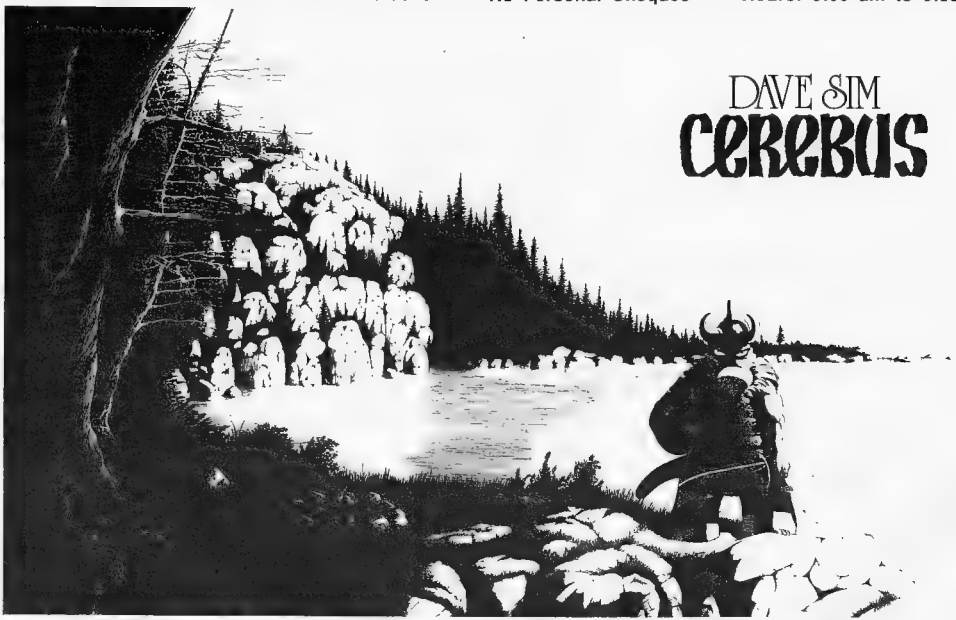
VISA

REPRINTS CEREBUS 1 - 25
22.00 U.S.
27.00 CANADIAN
plus $2.00 for postage

BOX OF 18 BOOKS
300.00 U.S.
400.00 CANADIAN

master charge
THE INTERBANK CARD

PHONE NUMBERS 519-576-7820 • 519-576-0610 No Personal Cheques Hours: 9:00 am to 6:00 pm



VISA

REPRINTS CEREBUS 1 - 25
22.00 U.S.
27.00 CANADIAN
plus $2.00 for postage

BOX OF 18 BOOKS
300.00 U.S.
400.00 CANADIAN

master charge
THE INTERBANK CARD

Make cheques payable to: AARDVARK-VANAHEIM, INC., Box 1674, Station 'C', Kitchener, Ontario N2G 4R2

VISA

REPRINTS CEREBUS 52 - 80
25.00 U.S.
30.00 CANADIAN
plus $2.50 for postage

BOX OF 16 BOOKS
300.00 U.S.
400.00 CANADIAN

master charge
THE INTERBANK CARD

Make cheques payable to: AARDVARK-VANAHEIM, INC., Box 1674, Station 'C', Kitchener, Ontario N2G 4R2

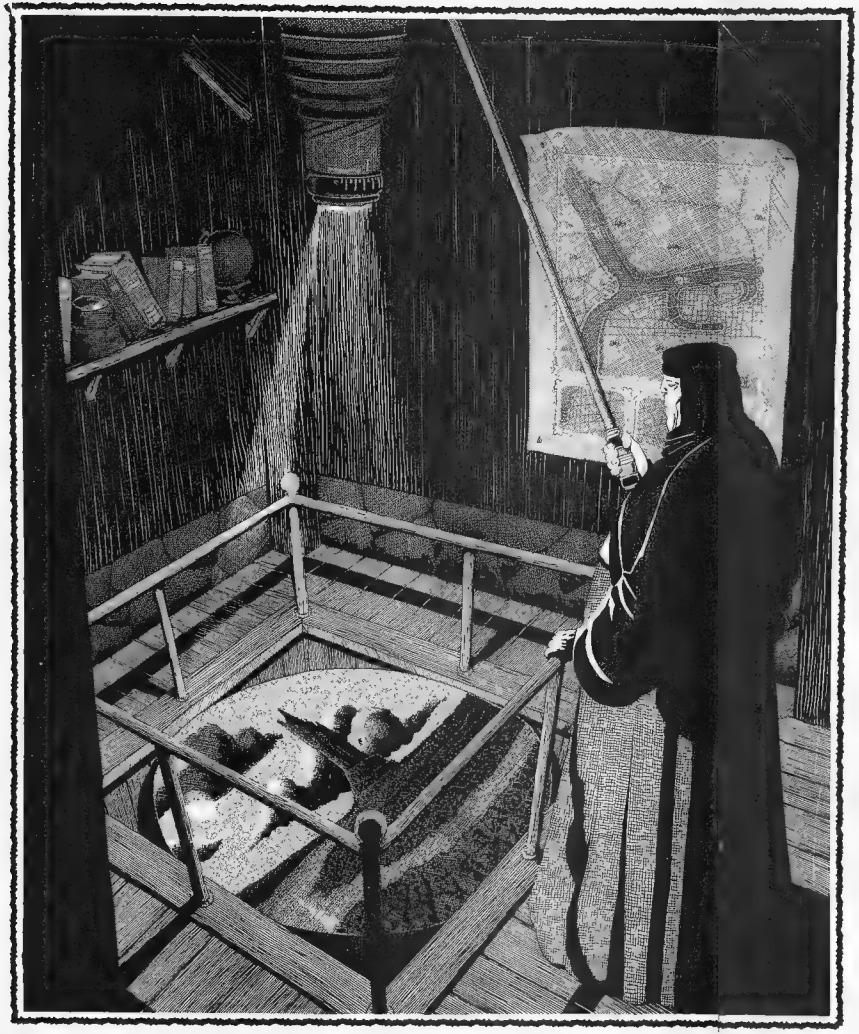
VISA

REPRINTS CEREBUS 52 - 80
25.00 U.S.
30.00 CANADIAN
plus $2.50 for postage

BOX OF 16 BOOKS
300.00 U.S.
400.00 CANADIAN

master charge
THE INTERBANK CARD

Accelerating smoothly, The Black Tower begins to revolve.



Cerebus' arm strikes the thick pane of Panrovian Dynasty glass, producing out of the polished, placidly-flowing whole, a spider-web of antiquitous fragments. The glittering rectangle shape of a splinter, corkscrewing from the point of impact, leaves a nearly imperceptible trail across the sweat-slickened fur of the Earth-pig's left breast.

Miles to the west, the Abbess stands contemplating, brow furrowed, thoughts racing. The object of her concentration is the surface of the concave dish below her, or more precisely, the images projected thereon by an elaborate series of lenses, gears and levers.

Thumb and forefinger manipulate the larger of two rings set within the handle. Images of the Docks, the Chesmi, the Feld, the Lower and Upper City, the soot-smudged and tottering remains of the Suburbs, like weary but resolute supplicants at the feet of some dark and terrible god, drift to the edges of the dish, and over.

Each twist of the ring brings it closer; a mindless behemoth drawn, turn by turn, across the intervening miles of buildings and countryside, its looming presence dwarfing all other features and terrain, filling this small room, thinning the air, crowding her so that, unconsciously, she grips the railing with trembling fingers.

In the blinking of an eye, ragged top flowing, reforming, swelling, the Tower doubles and redoubles its size. Its image inches across the face of the disc towards the upper rim. Relentless. Unstoppable.

The Abbess screams.

There is a man with a sword.
There is the pressure and coldness of metal-on-flesh binding her wrists.
She turns her head.
Someone laughs, far away.
There is a spoken command and the sensation of her own lips moving; but not of air escaping from her mouth.
There is a pressure of flesh on flesh.
"Stop him"
"Stop him"
There is a sound of breaking glass.

On the second floor of the small hotel, to the left, just past the stairs, in a small, sparsely furnished room lies a corpse, a short ceremonial knife thousands upon thousands of years old jutting awkwardly from its chest; the tendrils of blood encrusting the weapon have gone black and hard.

Most of one wall is missing. The dank air is cold and still.

In the couryard below, thousands of human forms, immobile, their breathing shallow, listen in vain for any sign of impending release.

There is a distant sound of breaking glass.

The lips of the corpse begin to move.

Decaying flesh and muscle pull the lip up and across its mate, exposing blackened gums, stretching, splitting slightly at the dryest points. It is not clear what word is being formed.

Then, once more, all is still.

At the periphery of his vision, out beyond the enfolding darkness of those branches most faintly-lit by his cooking fire, Bear sees the little people, hears the leaves rustle at their passing, smells the unexplained sweetness of their presence, their scent mingling with the cooking smells; now separate; now joined once more.

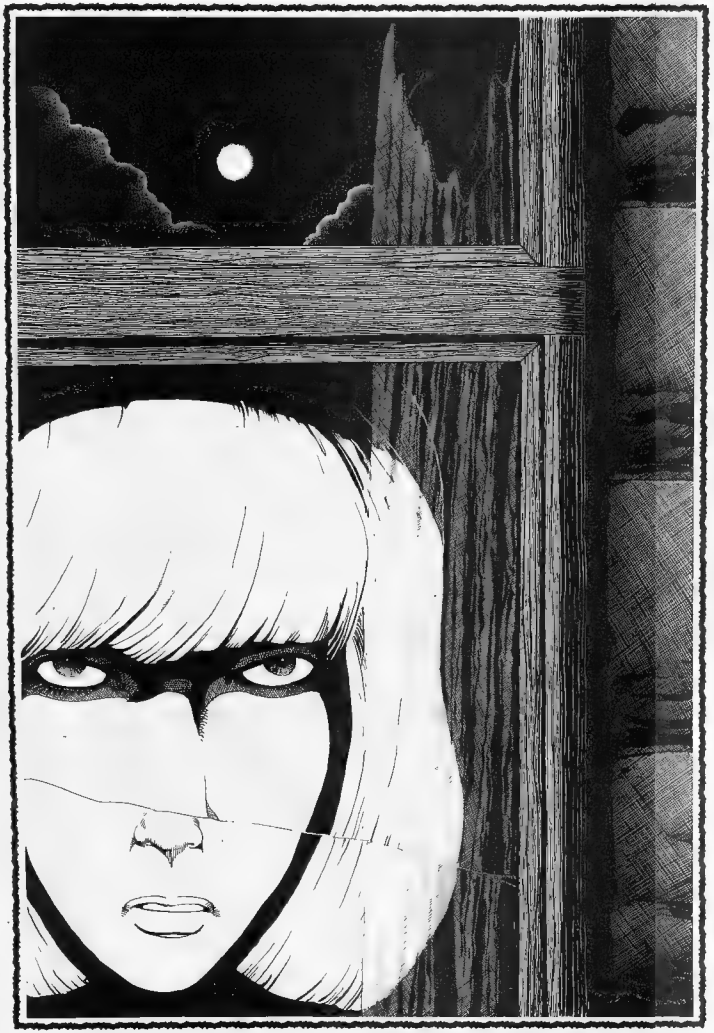
There is the sound of breaking glass.

A vase snatched through the open window of a cottage nearby? A cooking pot carried too hastily amid the tangled roots of these ancient trees? A finely-shaped flask, its rare and exotic contents now seeping into the mossy leaf-strewn floor of these woods?

He feels a sharp pain in the pad of his left hand, below the little finger. He examines the hand, twisting it this way and that in the firelight; sees the flash of reflected light in the small shard of glass there, then darkness, then another glint. He stares at the fragment for a very long time without moving. Then plucks it out and hurls it into the fire.

Little people, he thinks.

No doubt about it.



Jaka feels the delicate seepage of night air on her cheek, her breath lightly fogging the window. She holds still; so very, very still, convinced that some trick of perspective -- some optical illusion -- is at work. It is several minutes before she will acknowledge to herself that there is no trick, no illusion. The Tower is growing and it is growing at a phenomenal rate.

From the next room she can hear the sounds of drunken revelry, the clash of coins, slurred wagers. She feels a slight tremor in the soles of her feet, hears the musical rattling of the two china cups on the bureau.

With a grinding and granular snap, a crack forms across the width of the window.

Even then, her gaze never wavers.

The sudden chill of night air on his damp fur and a feeling of disorientation assail him through open space. Has Earth-age as he tumbles, he left

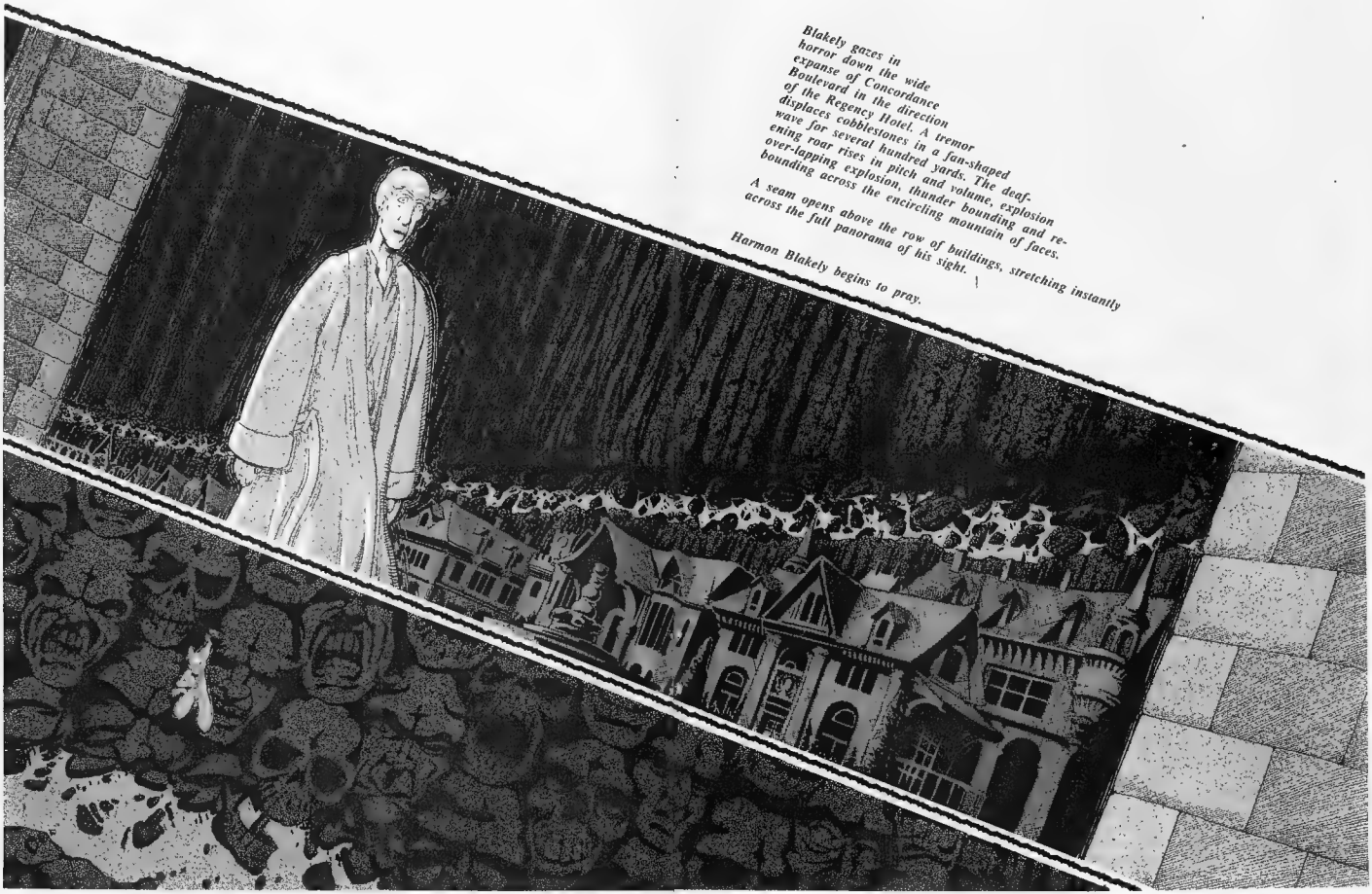
He hears a roar. Like that from a sea shell. But it's coming from outside. Beyond the window. Is it a monument, a cathedral, or a mountain? He can't tell. Maybe it's all three. Fragments of ancient civilizations, discovered by explorers, become part of the landscape. Ruins to be studied and admired for generations to come.

Down, he plunges in a gentle arc, some glassy shards streaking past him, most falling with him, frozen in eccentric patterns. Squinting, he sees the droplets of his sweat rise from the back of his hand. Squinting, he flings the hand outward.

Even as blackened stone touches palm, his grip is secure; with a muscle-wrenching tug, his fall is arrested.

The splinters and fragments continue their descent alone.

The ever-increasing roar dwarfs even his mounting fear.



Blakely gazes in horror down the wide expanse of Concordance Boulevard in the direction of the Regency Hotel. A tremor displaces cobblestones in a fan-shaped wave for several hundred yards. The deafening roar rises in pitch and volume, explosion over-lapping explosion, thunder bounding and rebounding across the encircling mountain of faces.

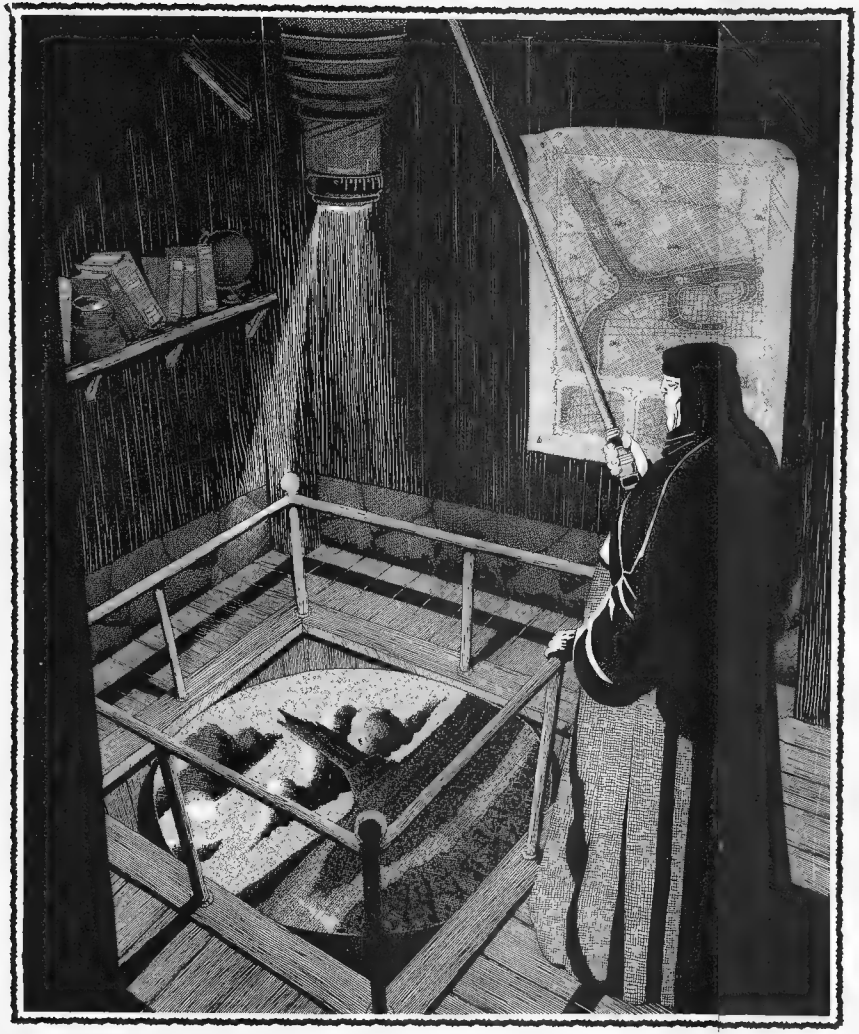
A seam opens above the row of buildings, stretching instantly across the full panorama of his sight.

Harmon Blakely begins to pray.

Rising into the night sky, faster and still faster, it is a short moment before the Tower reaches -- then surpasses -- the speed of sound.

The explosive displacement of air shatters fully half the windows in the Upper City and a third of those in the Lower.

The Earth-pig born hears nothing.



Cerebus' arm strikes the thick pane of Panrovian Dynasty glass, producing out of the polished, placidly-flowing whole, a spider-web of antiquitous fragments. The glittering rectangle shape of a splinter, corkscrewing from the point of impact, leaves a nearly imperceptible trail across the sweat-slickened fur of the Earth-pig's left breast.

Miles to the west, the Abbess stands contemplating, brow furrowed, thoughts racing. The object of her concentration is the surface of the concave dish below her, or more precisely, the images projected thereon by an elaborate series of lenses, gears and levers.

Thumb and forefinger manipulate the larger of two rings set within the handle. Images of the Docks, the Chesmi, the Feld, the Lower and Upper City, the soot-smudged and tottering remains of the Suburbs, like weary but resolute supplicants at the feet of some dark and terrible god, drift to the edges of the dish, and over.

Each twist of the ring brings it closer; a mindless behemoth drawn, turn by turn, across the intervening miles of buildings and countryside, its looming presence dwarfing all other features and terrain, filling this small room, thinning the air, crowding her so that, unconsciously, she grips the railing with trembling fingers.

In the blinking of an eye, ragged top flowing, reforming, swelling, the Tower doubles and redoubles its size. Its image inches across the face of the disc towards the upper rim. Relentless. Unstoppable.

The Abbess screams.

There is a man with a sword.
There is the pressure and coldness of metal-on-flesh binding her wrists.
She turns her head.
Someone laughs, far away.
There is a spoken command and the sensation of her own lips moving; but not of air escaping from her mouth.
There is a pressure of flesh on flesh.
"Stop him"
"Stop him"
There is a sound of breaking glass.

On the second floor of the small hotel, to the left, just past the stairs, in a small, sparsely furnished room lies a corpse, a short ceremonial knife thousands upon thousands of years old jutting awkwardly from its chest; the tendrils of blood encrusting the weapon have gone black and hard.

Most of one wall is missing. The dank air is cold and still.

In the couryard below, thousands of human forms, immobile, their breathing shallow, listen in vain for any sign of impending release.

There is a distant sound of breaking glass.

The lips of the corpse begin to move.

Decaying flesh and muscle pull the lip up and across its mate, exposing blackened gums, stretching, splitting slightly at the dryest points. It is not clear what word is being formed.

Then, once more, all is still.

At the periphery of his vision, out beyond the enfolding darkness of those branches most faintly-lit by his cooking fire, Bear sees the little people, hears the leaves rustle at their passing, smells the unexplained sweetness of their presence, their scent mingling with the cooking smells; now separate; now joined once more.

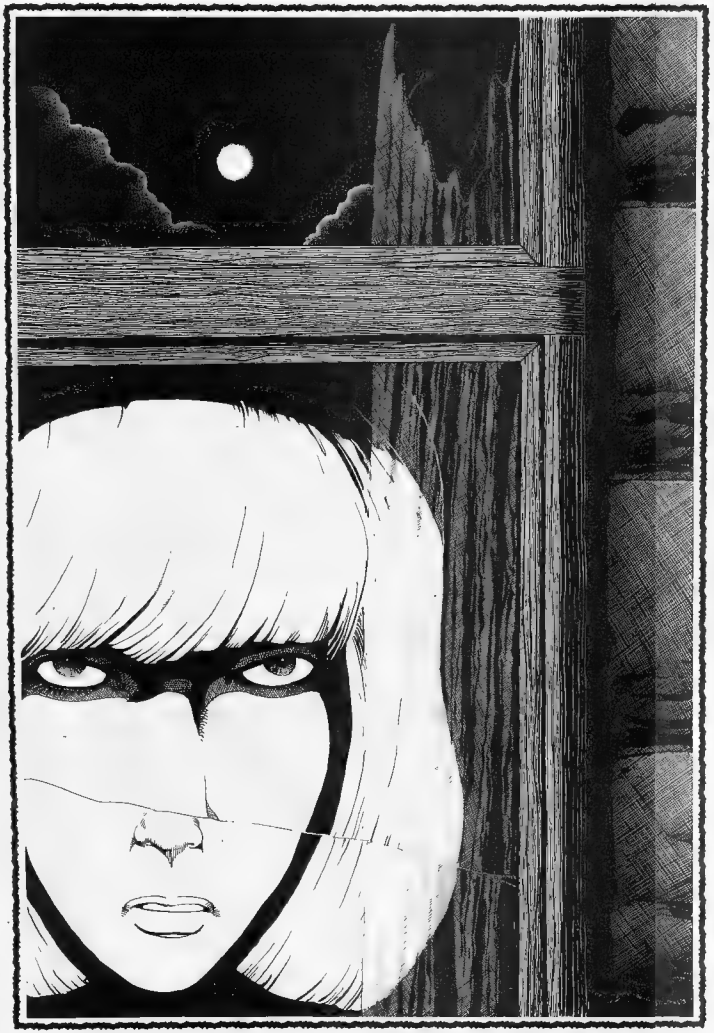
There is the sound of breaking glass.

A vase snatched through the open window of a cottage nearby? A cooking pot carried too hastily amid the tangled roots of these ancient trees? A finely-shaped flask, its rare and exotic contents now seeping into the mossy leaf-strewn floor of these woods?

He feels a sharp pain in the pad of his left hand, below the little finger. He examines the hand, twisting it this way and that in the firelight; sees the flash of reflected light in the small shard of glass there, then darkness, then another glint. He stares at the fragment for a very long time without moving. Then plucks it out and hurls it into the fire.

Little people, he thinks.

No doubt about it.



Jaka feels the delicate seepage of night air on her cheek, her breath lightly fogging the window. She holds still; so very, very still, convinced that some trick of perspective -- some optical illusion -- is at work. It is several minutes before she will acknowledge to herself that there is no trick, no illusion. The Tower is growing and it is growing at a phenomenal rate.

From the next room she can hear the sounds of drunken revelry, the clash of coins, slurred wagers. She feels a slight tremor in the soles of her feet, hears the musical rattling of the two china cups on the bureau.

With a grinding and granular snap, a crack forms across the width of the window.

Even then, her gaze never wavers.

The sudden chill of night air on his damp fur and a feeling of disorientation as he tumbles through open space. Has Earth-pig ex Machina left him floating?

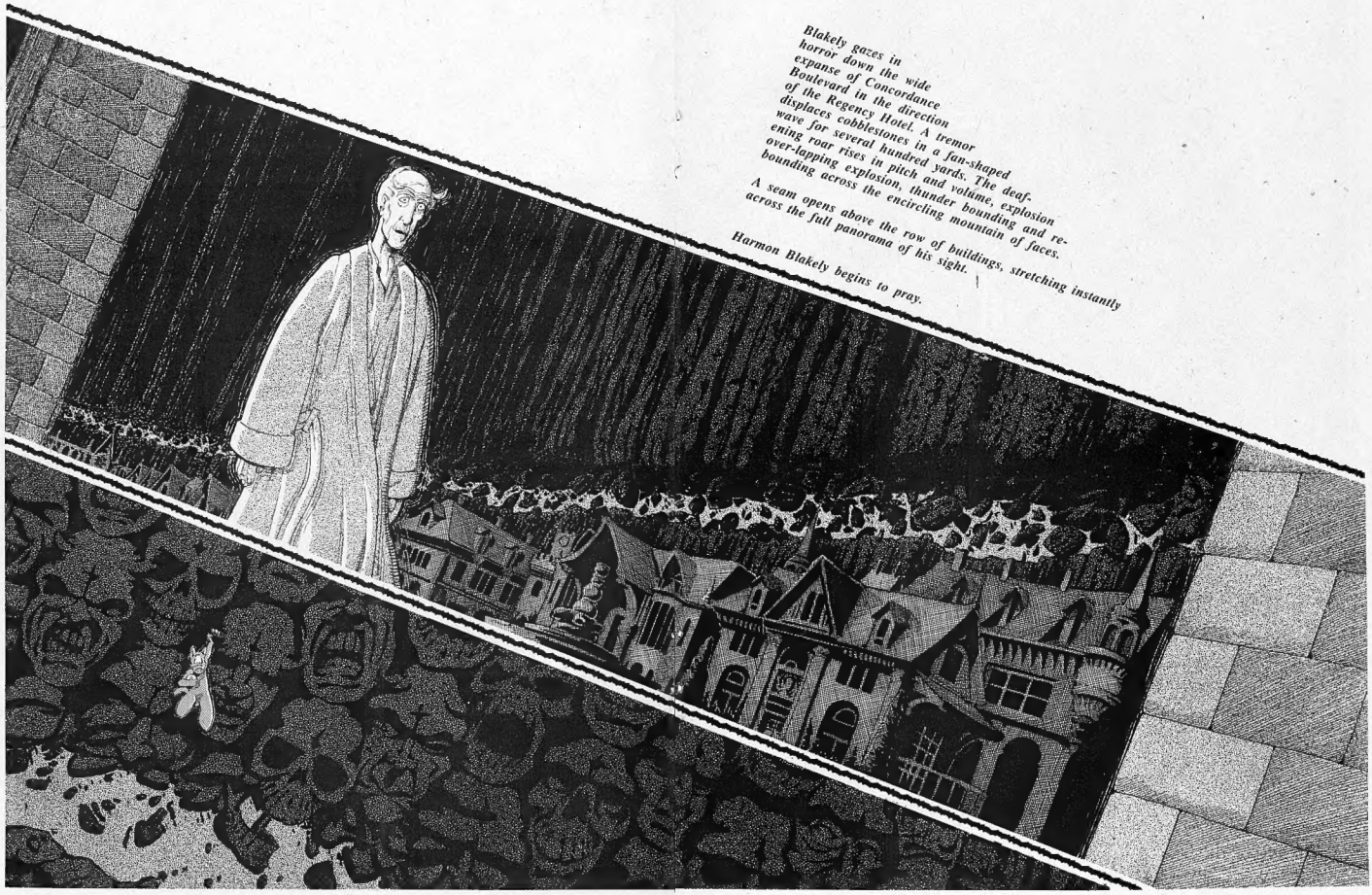
He hears a roar. Like that from a sea shell. Like the echoing, disintegration of windows. Is it for a moment, pandora, to be glittering fragments. He and Mej hang suspended between the ancient church and the leering wall of grotesqueries.

Down, he plunges in a gentle arc, some glassy shards streaking past him, most falling with him, frozen in eccentric patterns. Squinting, he sees the droplets of his sweat rise from the back of his hand. Squinting, he flings the hand outward.

Even as blackened stone touches palm, his grip is secure; with a muscle-wrenching tug, his fall is arrested.

The splinters and fragments continue their descent alone.

The ever-increasing roar dwarfs even his mounting fear.



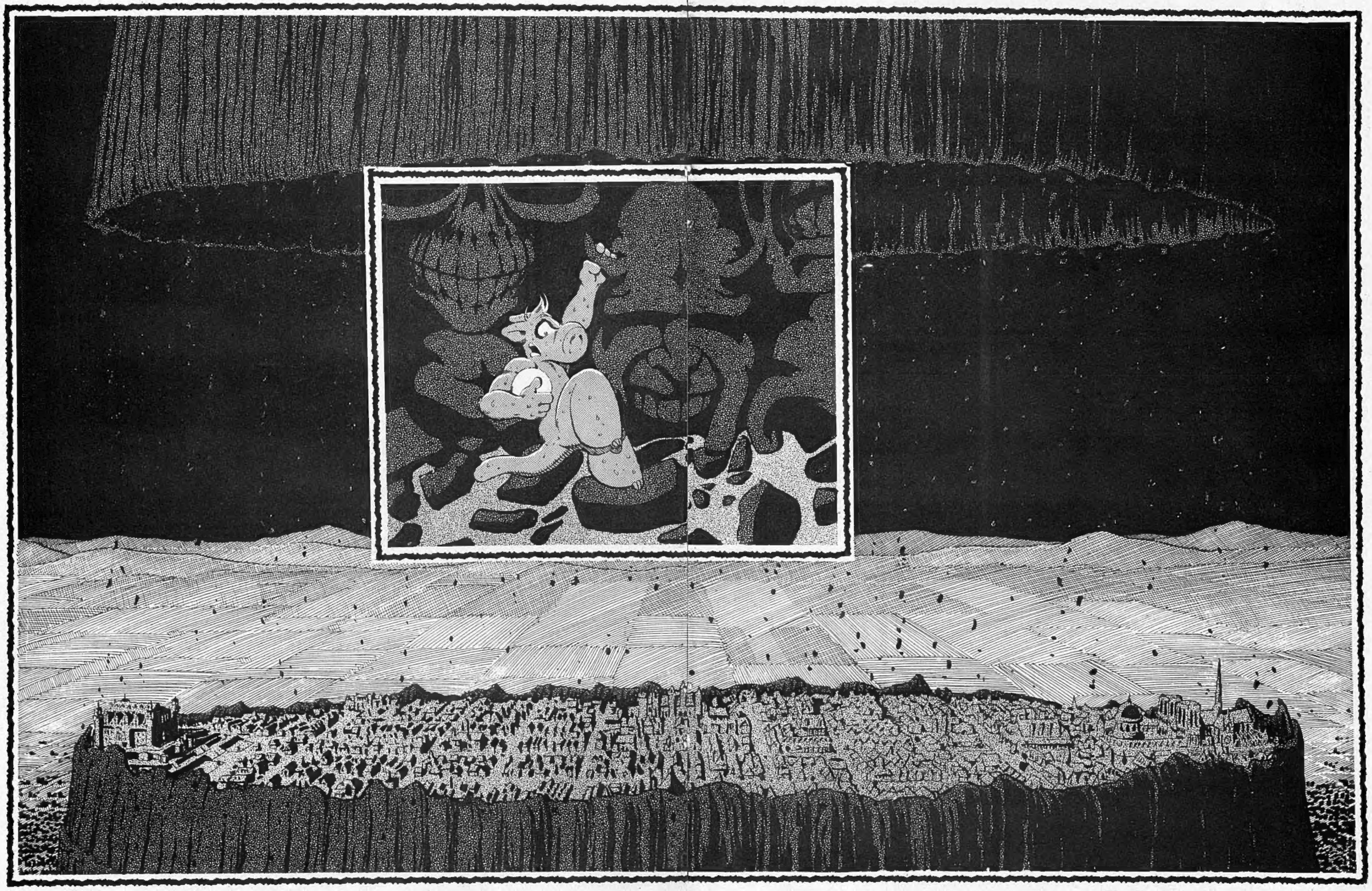
Blakely gazes in horror down the wide expanse of Concordance Boulevard in the direction of the Regency Hotel. A tremor displaces cobblestones in a fan-shaped wave for several hundred yards. The deafening roar rises in pitch and volume, explosion over-lapping explosion, thunder bounding and rebounding across the encircling mountain of faces.

A seam opens above the row of buildings, stretching instantly across the full panorama of his sight.

Harmon Blakely begins to pray.

Rising into the night sky, faster and still faster, it is a short moment before the Tower reaches -- then surpasses -- the speed of sound.

The explosive displacement of air shatters fully half the windows in the Upper City and a third of those in the Lower.



The Earth-pig born hears nothing.